

**FACT SHEET**  
**Catawba County EcoComplex**  
**Bio-Energy Facility**

The Catawba County Board of Commissioners held a work session on May 17, 2010 at the CVCC East Campus, to receive information on current and future plans at the County's EcoComplex. A number of partners in the growing EcoComplex brought information to the Board including professors from Appalachian State University, North Carolina A&T State University and UNC-Charlotte who discussed research being conducted at the EcoComplex; Catawba County Economic Development Corporation President Scott Millar; Leroy Lail, a member of the University of North Carolina Board of Governors, and Dr. Roger George, General Manager of GE Power & Water's gas engine operations for North America.

Here are some facts related to the EcoComplex and the Bio-Energy Facility that will soon be in operation at the EcoComplex, and the benefits of both to the citizens of Catawba County.

**What is the EcoComplex?** It is a developing system that intends to recover all useable products and by-products from a group of private and public partners located in a close-knit, defined area. This group of partners works together to use each other's waste products either as a source of energy (electricity, steam, or heat) or as a raw material for the production of their own product. These shared relationships bring the old saying of "one man's trash is another man's treasure" into real life. In addition to these shared relationships, the EcoComplex is also focused on producing and using "green" energy and on the economic development of Catawba County.



**What is the new Bio-Energy Facility?** The Bio-Energy Facility will be the first of its kind in North America. It will convert wood waste into a gas that will create electricity, steam, heat, and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). It will use the latest clean emission gasification technologies and engines to generate over 2.5 megawatts of electricity per hour, enough electricity to power 1500 average sized homes. Initially, the Bio-Energy Facility will convert wood waste from the EcoComplex entities but, in the near future, through past research performed by the University of British Columbia and research planned by UNC-Charlotte at the EcoComplex, the facility will also have the capability to convert wastewater sludge, seed meal, and algae into energy.

**How will the citizens of Catawba County benefit from the Bio-Energy Facility and the expanding EcoComplex?**

**Potential creation of new jobs-** The Bio-Energy Facility will increase the County's ability to create electricity. In 1999, Catawba County became one of the first counties in the nation to begin using landfill gas to produce electricity. 2.5 megawatts per hour is now being produced through the landfill gas to energy facility. The Bio-Energy Facility will increase electrical production to over 5 megawatts per hour. Economic development officials say the production of 5 megawatts of "green" energy will be very attractive to companies that are looking for sites that can produce and/or have available green energy, which will help Catawba County recruit new businesses in the



future.

**Elimination of some landfill fees and stabilization of tipping fees-** The EcoComplex has allowed the County to accept clean lumber, less than 8 feet in length, and clean and uncontaminated wood pallets free of charge at the landfill since November 2008. Industrial waste and other contaminated wood disposal does still require a fee because the contamination must be removed from the wood before it can be recycled. Catawba County's landfill tipping fee remained unchanged for fourteen years until the introduction of a new state-mandated tax on landfill tonnage in 2007 and the expansion of the EcoComplex is expected to keep the tipping fee stable into the future.

**Generation of additional revenues-** The County has for many years sold electricity produced at the EcoComplex to the green energy market. The County has produced and sold 140 million kilowatts, ample energy to provide electricity to 1400 homes continuously for 10 years. The electricity produced by the Blackburn Landfill Gas to Energy Facility has been sold to Duke Energy and Renewable Energy Certificates to markets in California and Texas. The County has collected over \$5.75 million in revenues from a \$3.2 million investment, which has led to the creation of the EcoComplex, its private, public, and university partnerships, over 150 jobs and more than \$30 million in taxable investments. The increased ability to generate electricity made possible by the Bio-Energy Facility will increase this revenue, which will also help keep tipping fees stable and insure the County can continue to operate its landfill and convenience centers entirely with user fees, with no property tax dollars being used.

**Further reduction of the waste stream-** The EcoComplex was first created to address a need to reduce the waste stream coming into the county's landfill. It has helped bring about a 33% reduction in the county's waste stream since 1999 and has played a role in Catawba County's ranking second among North Carolina counties in the amount of waste recycled, per person, for the last three years. The Bio-Energy Facility is expected to further reduce this waste stream.



**When will the Bio-Energy Facility be in operation?** The County anticipates the facility will be fully operational in the fall of 2012.

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